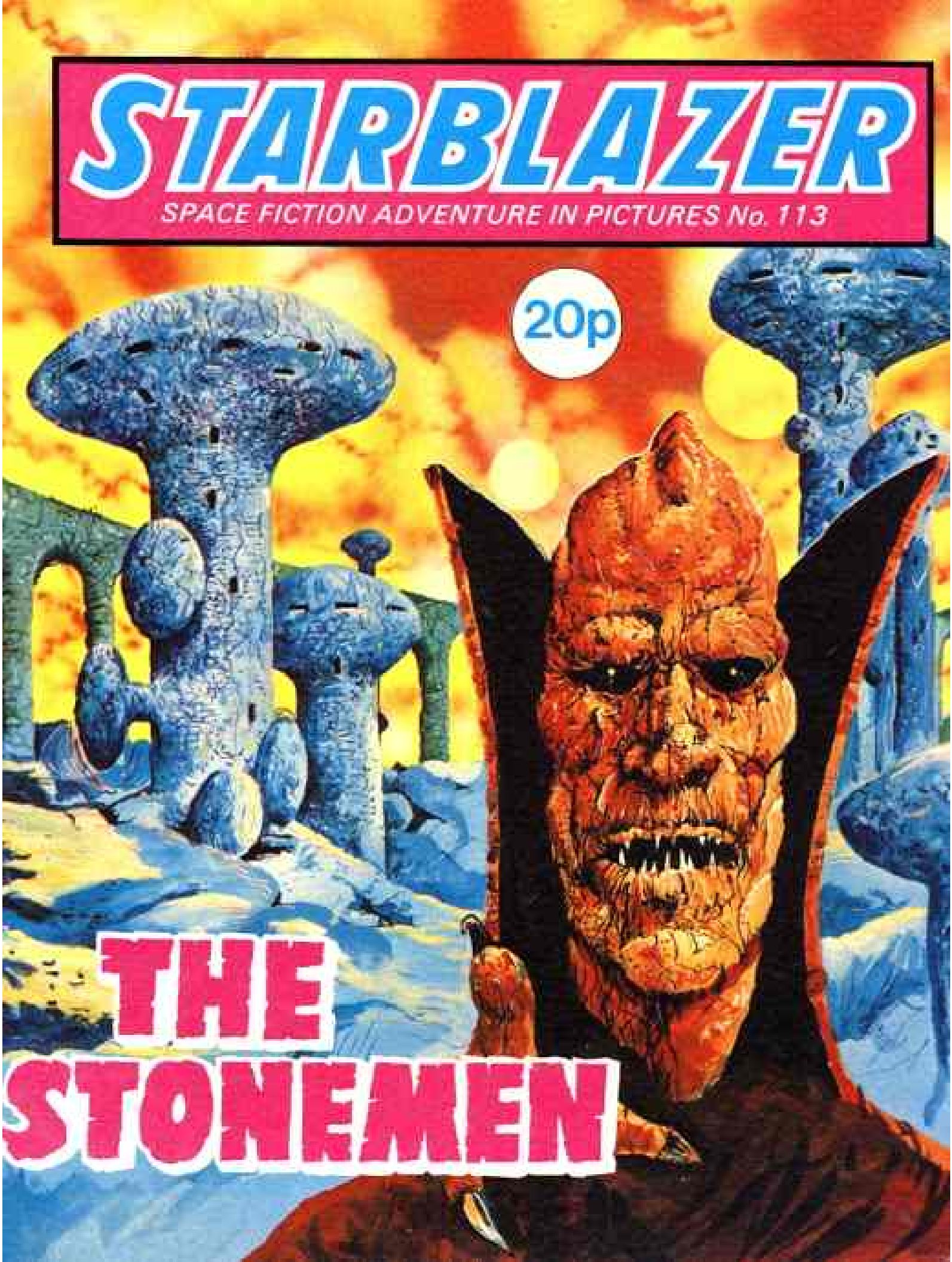
# STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 113

20p

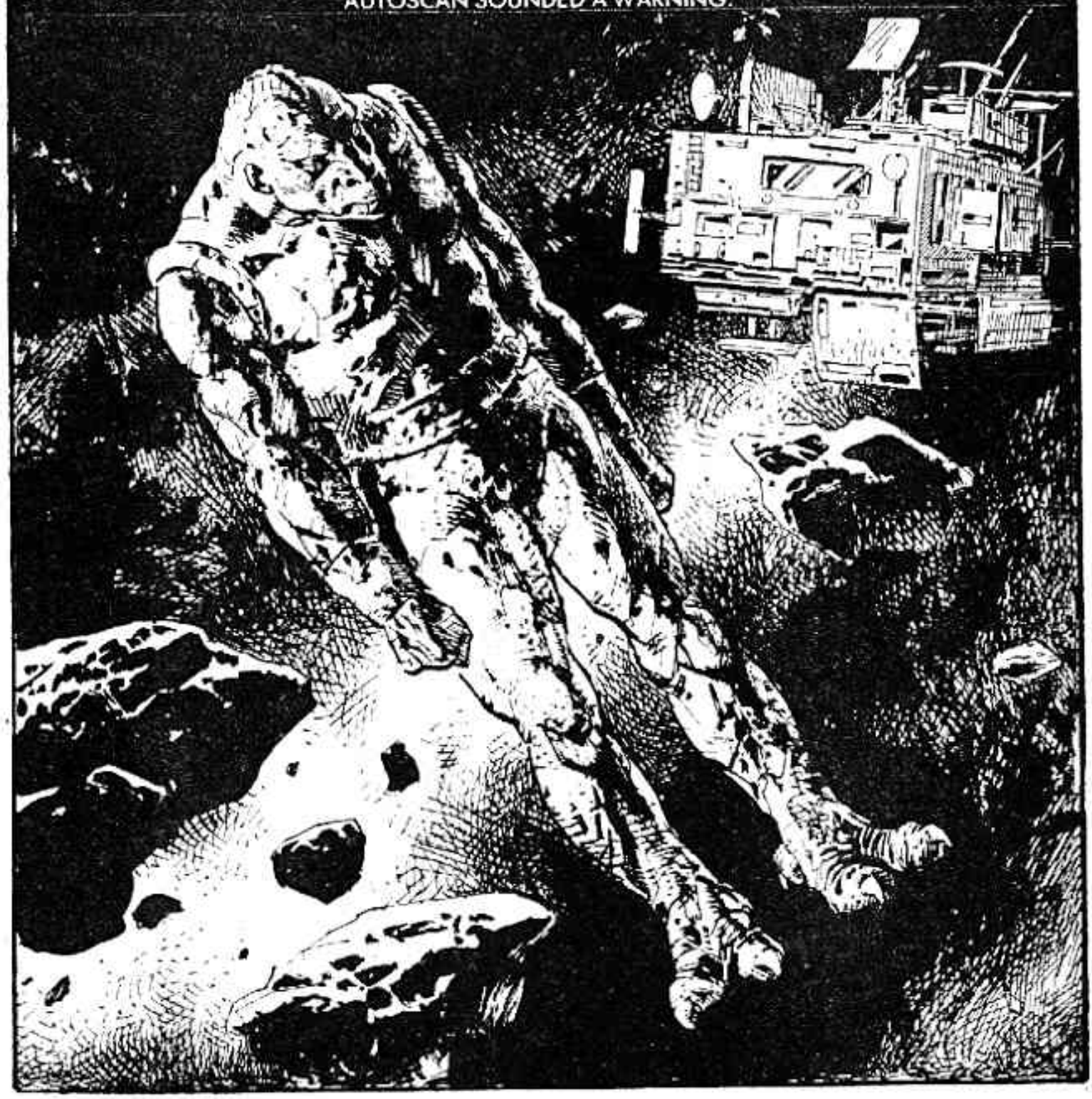


# THE STONEMEN

SPACE IS A VAST AND LARGELY UNCHARTED WILDERNESS OF INHOSPITABLE PLANETS, DRIFTING DEBRIS AND SHATTERING DISCOVERIES. THIS IS THE STORY OF THE CREW OF STARSHIP ULTRA, A TERRAN NAVY SURVEY CRAFT. WHILE WARPING ITS WAY BACK TO A BASE ALONG A LITTLE-USED STAR ROUTE, ITS SCREENS PICKED UP SOMETHING UNUSUAL . . . UNIDENTIFIED . . . AND UNBELIEVABLE.

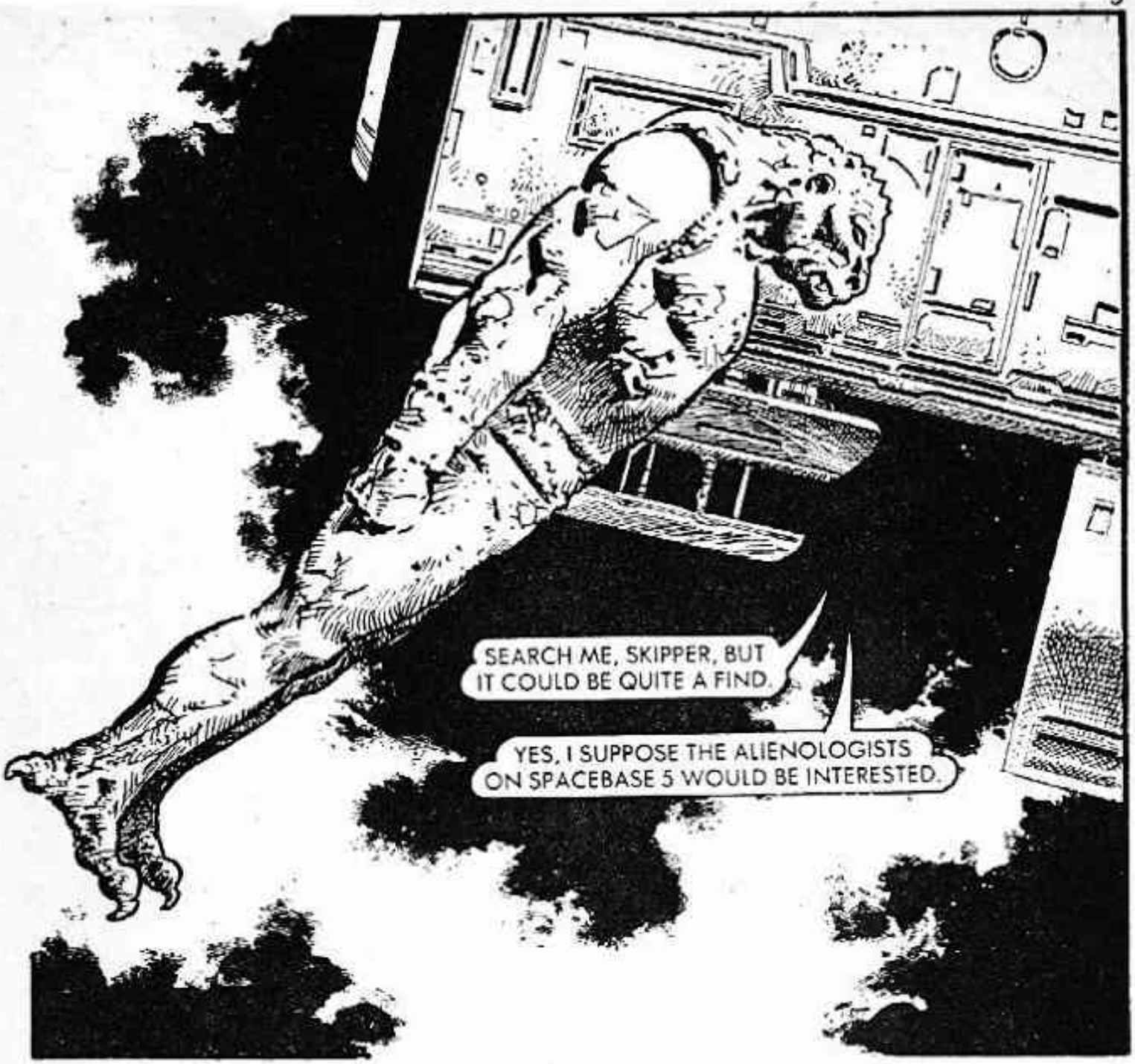
# THE STONEMEN

THE DATE WAS JUNE 20th, 2204 AND THE STARSHIP ULTRA HAD COMPLETED A SURVEY MISSION DEEP IN PREVIOUSLY UNCHARTED SPACE. ON BOARD, CAPTAIN JERRY LANG AND HIS CREW WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO THEIR ARRIVAL AT SPACEBASE 5, WHEN THE AUTOSCAN SOUNDED A WARNING.



SKIPPER! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS — 042071 . . .

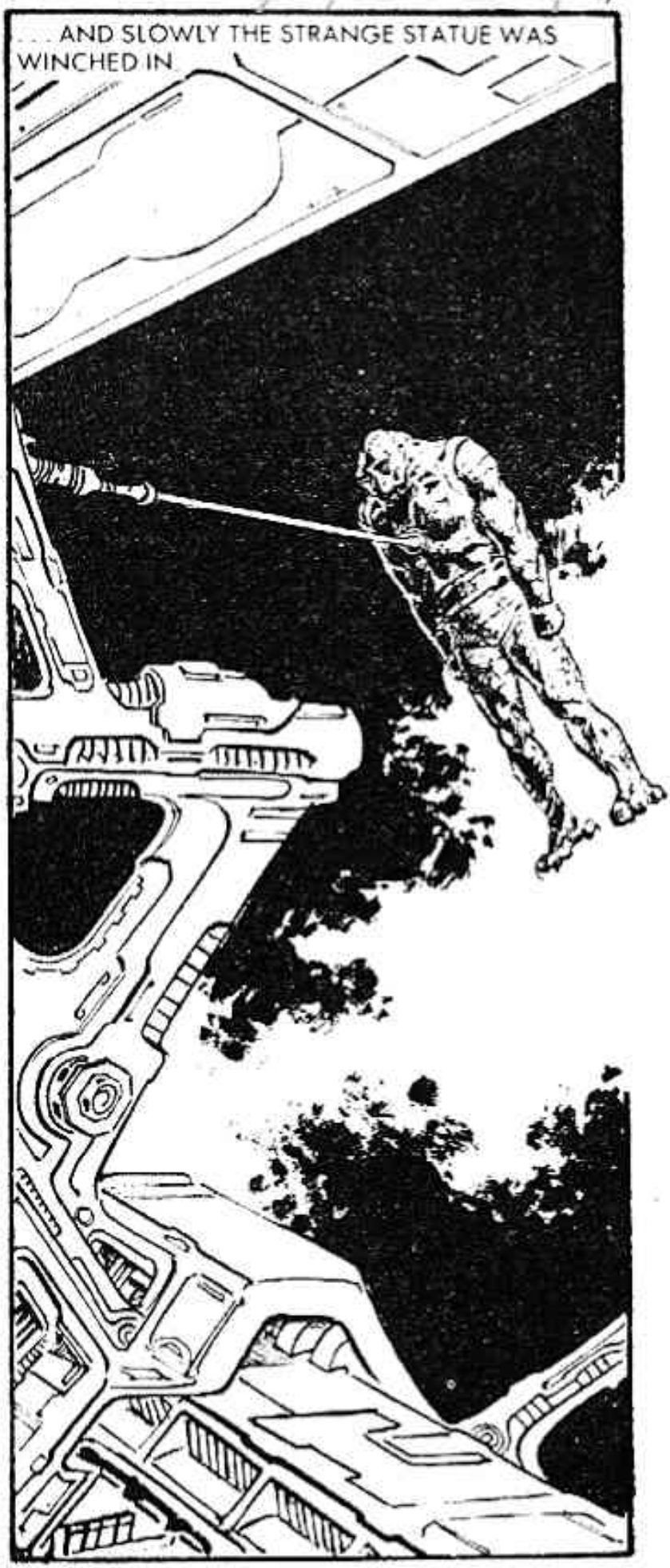
WHAT IS IT, BEN?
OFFHAND, I'D SAY IT WAS A STATUE! WHAT'S IT DOING OUT HERE?


SEARCH ME, SKIPPER, BUT IT COULD BE QUITE A FIND.
YES, I SUPPOSE THE ALIENOLOGISTS ON SPACEBASE 5 WOULD BE INTERESTED.

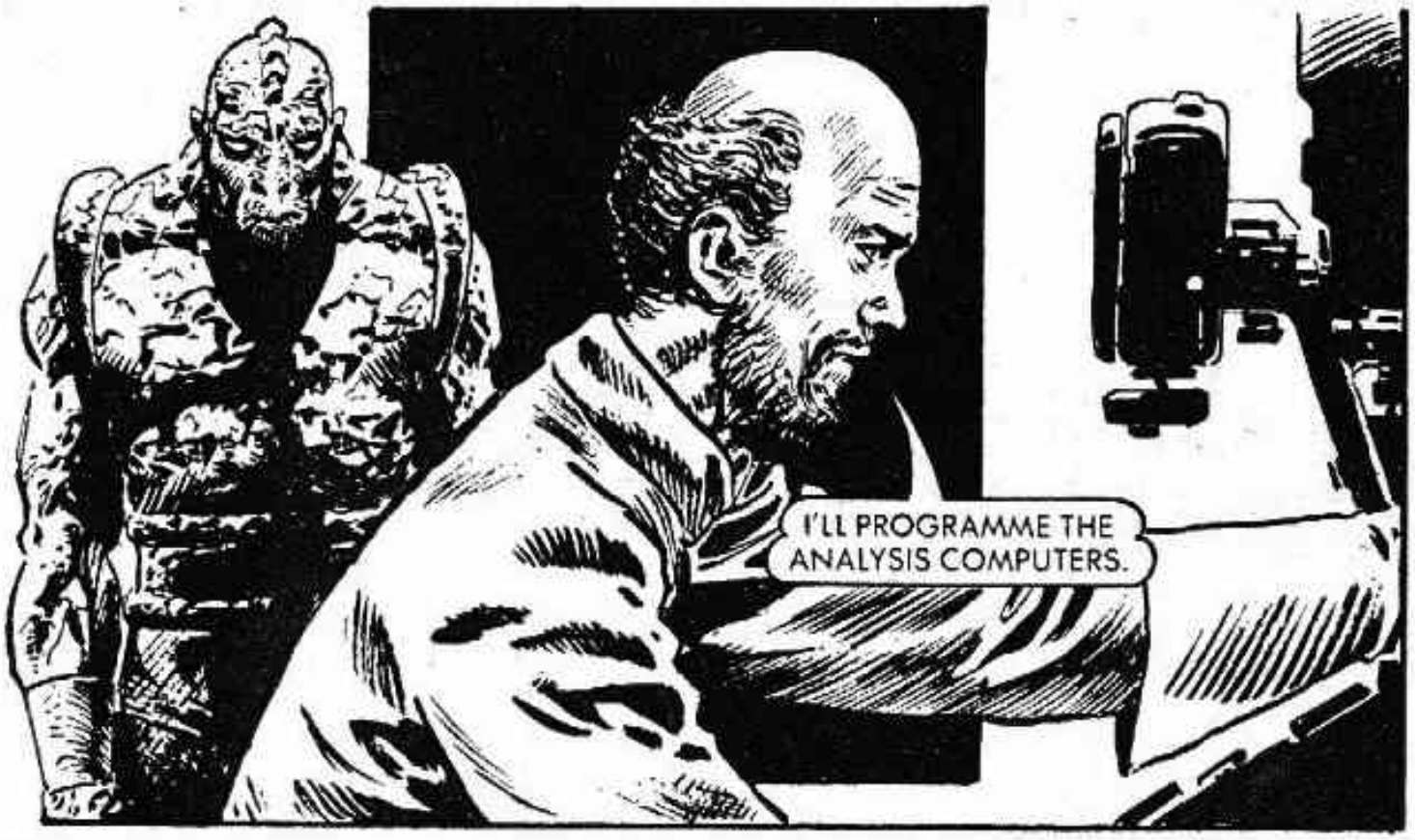
SPECTROANALYSIS CAN'T IDENTIFY THE STATUE'S COMPOSITION, SKIP. BUT IT'S NOT LIVING MATTER.

BRING IT ABOARD. PUT IT IN THE QUARANTINE BAY.
CREWMAN RYAN, SUIT UP AND MEET ME IN LOADING BAY C . . .
AYE, AYE, CAPTAIN.
LANG AND RYAN DONNED SUITS, EXTRA VEHICULAR PACKS, AND SPACE-WALKED TO THE STATUE . . .
IT LOOKS EVIL . . . EVEN THOUGH IT'S JUST A STATUE.
YES, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, RYAN . . .

CAREFULLY THEY ATTACHED VACUUM PADS . . .


. . . AND SLOWLY THE STRANGE STATUE WAS WINCHED IN

IN THE QUARANTINE BAY, DOCTOR DOUGLAS PROGRAMMED A SERIES OF TESTS—


I'LL PROGRAMME THE ANALYSIS COMPUTERS.

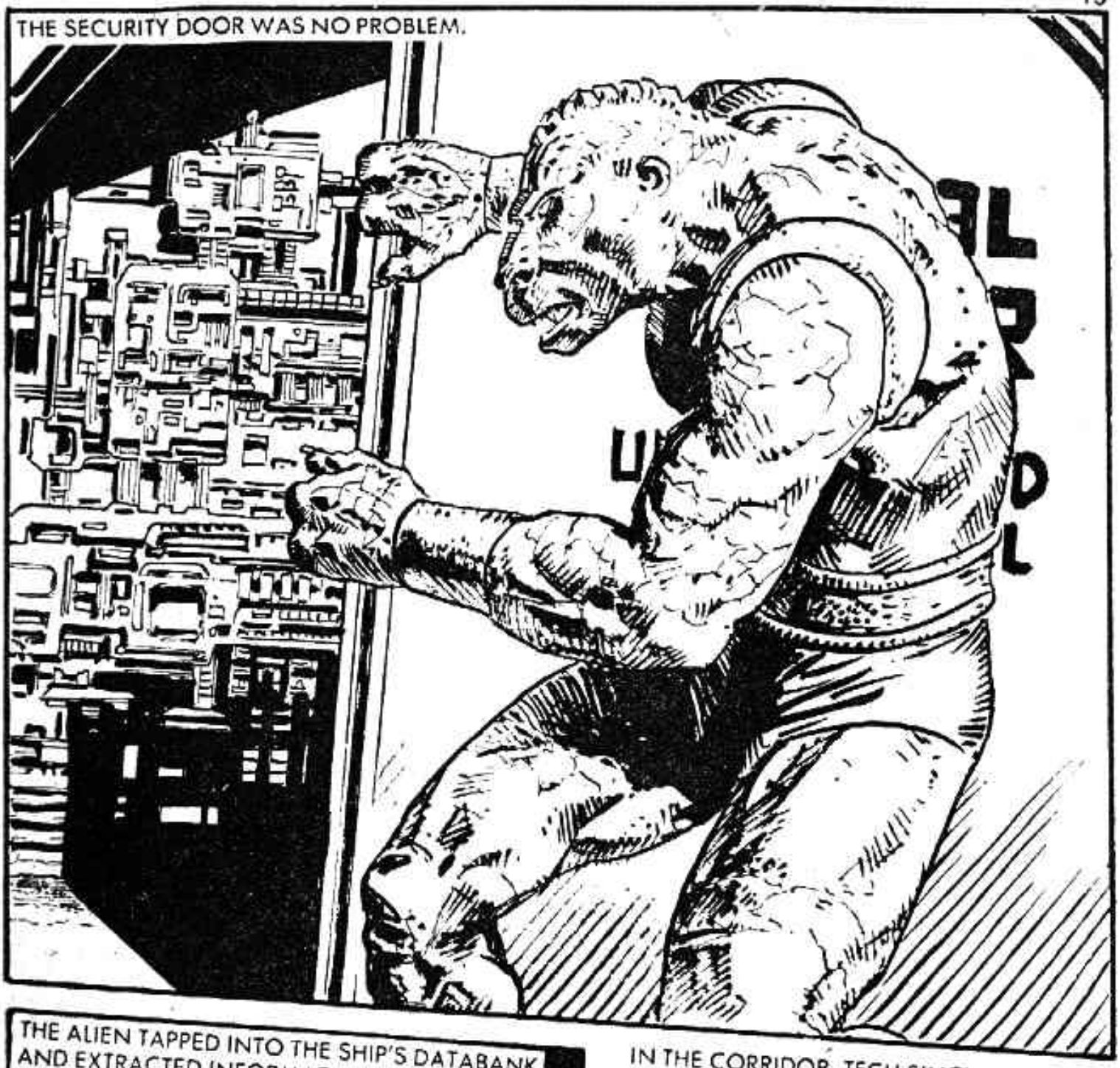
DOCTOR DOUGLAS WAS COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE TASK IN HAND . . .

. . . UNTIL FETID BREATH MADE HIM TURN —
NO! NO!
BEN HEARD THE SCREAM FROM THE CORRIDOR —
WHAT THE . . . ?

WHEN HAMMER ARRIVED, DOCTOR DOUGLAS WAS DEAD —
DEAD . . . BUT HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
THE SECURING BOLTS OF THAT COMPUTER CABINET MUST HAVE SHEARED DURING WARP-VIBRATION, WHEN DOC WENT TO USE IT, THE WHOLE THING FELL ON HIM.
I WONDER . . .
9-X-1
NOTHING ON SCAN . . . I SUPPOSE THE CABINET COULD HAVE WORKED LOOSE IN HYPER WARP.

RETURN TO SPACEBASE 5.
THE QUARANTINE ROOM WAS SEALED AND THE STATUE LEFT ALONE . . . BUT NOT LIFELESS.

THE EARTHMEN SUSPECT NOTHING. NOW TO FIND OUT ALL ABOUT THIS SHIP.
WITH AN UNERRING SENSE OF DIRECTION, THE BEING MADE FOR THE CENTRAL COMPUTER.
CENTRAL COMPUTER
NO UNAUTHORISED PERSONNEL


THE SECURITY DOOR WAS NO PROBLEM.

THE ALIEN TAPPED INTO THE SHIP'S DATABANK AND EXTRACTED INFORMATION.

IN THE CORRIDOR, TECH SINCLAIR WAS HEADING FOR BED AFTER A LONG WATCH.
THAT DOOR SHOULD BE SEALED . . .

JUPE! THE STATUE'S ALIVE . . .
SINCLAIR EMPTIED THE LASER'S MAGAZINE AT THE ALIEN . . .

BUT THE CREATURE REVERTED TO ITS STATUE-LIKE STATE —
IT'S DEFLECTING THE BOLTS.
ONCE THE BLASTER WAS EMPTY —
DIE, EARTHMAN!

THE ALIEN DISPOSED OF SINCLAIR'S BODY —
SERVICE SHAFT
I WILL MAKE THE EARTHMAN'S DEATH LOOK LIKE ANOTHER 'ACCIDENT.'
THEN —
DANGER
THE ALIEN KEYED IN THE SECURITY, WORKED OUT FROM THE CYPHERS STORED IN THE CENTRAL COMPUTER.

SOON THIS SHIP WILL BE MINE!

MEANWHILE, SINCLAIR HAD BEEN FOUND —
HE MUST HAVE SLIPPED AND FALLEN.
WHY WAS HE IN THE SERVICE SHAFT? WHY DIDN'T HE USE THE FLOATER? WHY IS HIS BLASTER EMPTY?

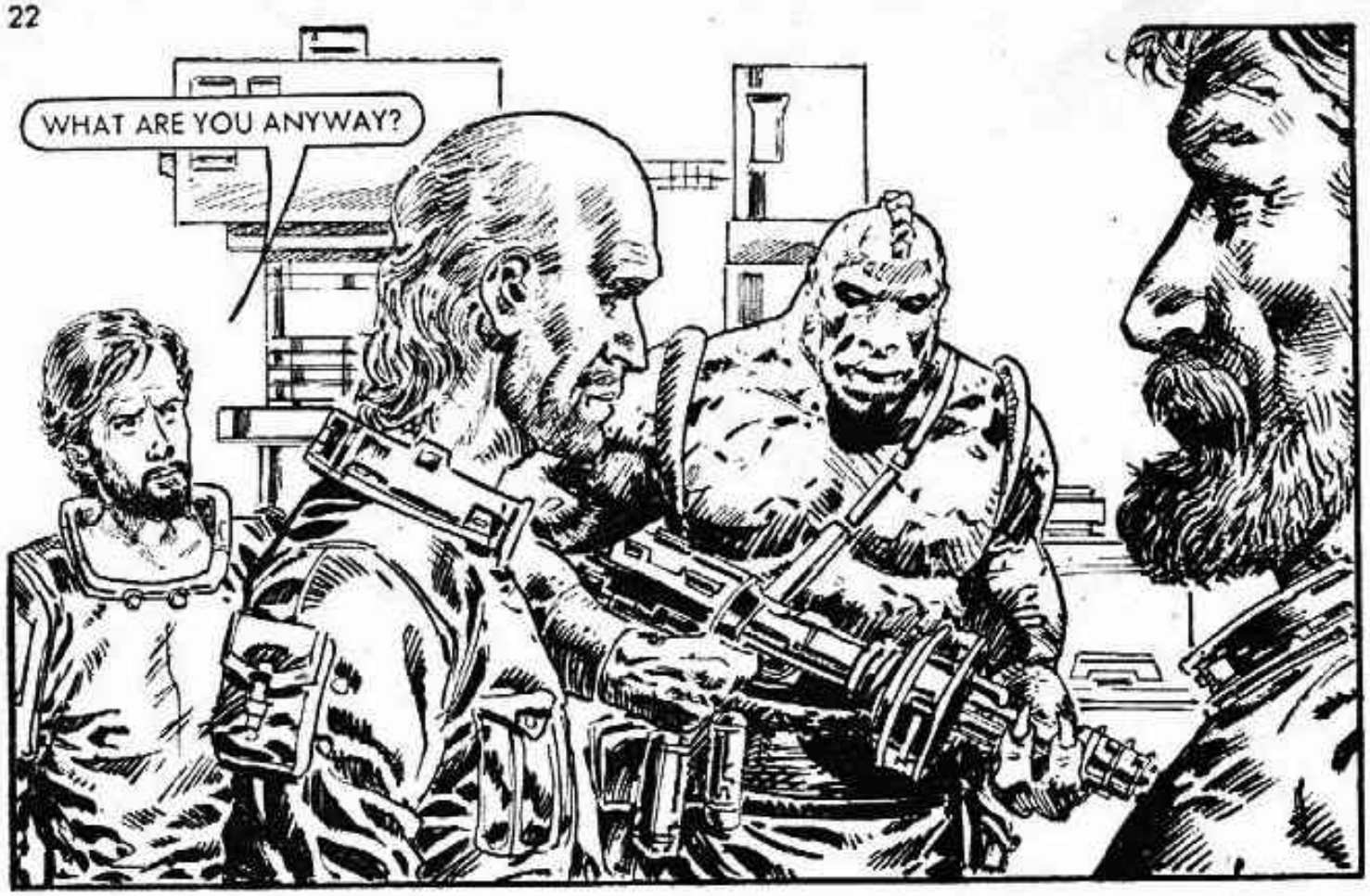
I MAY BE WRONG, BUT THAT STATUE HAS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH OUR TWO 'ACCIDENTS!' I WANT IT BLASTED INTO SPACE!
THAT MAY NOT BE SO EASY, CAPTAIN!
THE STATUE . . .
TECH HERTZ APPEARED AT THAT VERY SECOND . . .
SKIP, THE ARMOURY HAS BEEN BROKEN INTO . . . OH, JUPE . . .

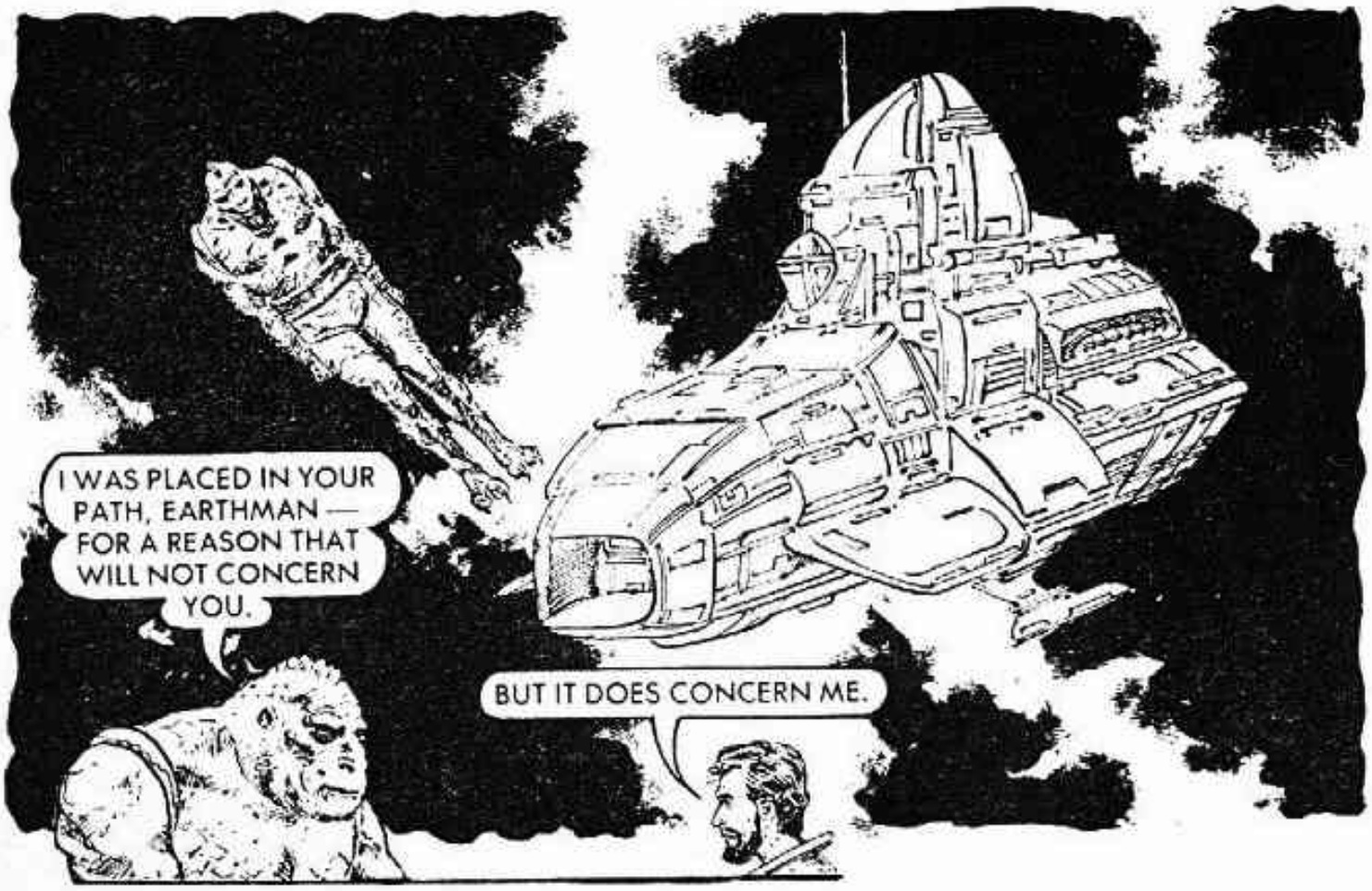
BUT HERTZ'S LASER BLAST BOUNCED OFF THE STATUE AS IT CHANGED TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM. ONCE HERTZ HAD TO RELOAD —

THERE WAS NO OPTION BUT TO OBEY—

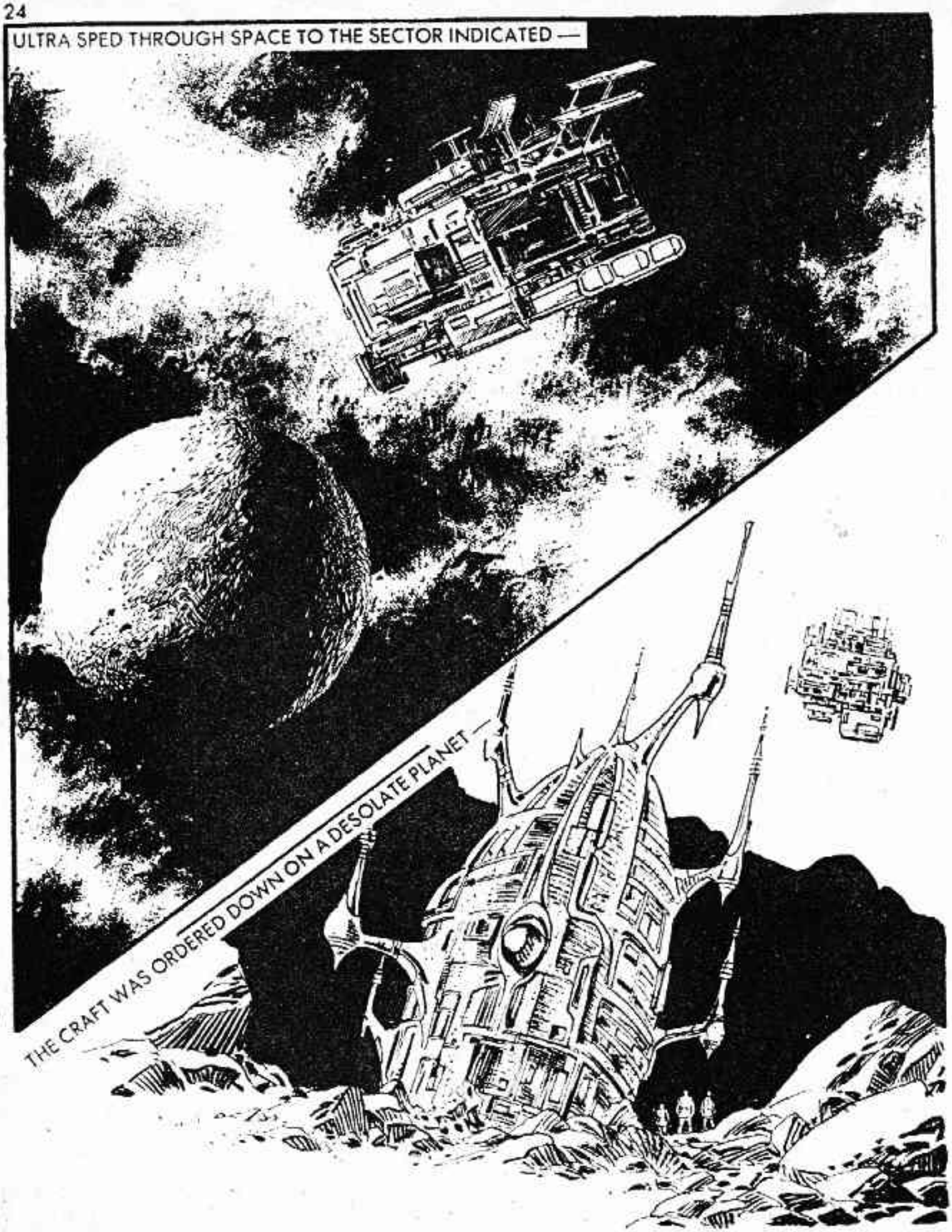
THE REST OF THE CREW REACHED THE BRIDGE—

THE SHIP IS NOW UNDER MY COMMAND. SET THIS COURSE, CAPTAIN: VECTOR 0876TY890. MAXIMUM SPEED.
ULTRA TURNED ON TO THE NEW BEARING.


WHAT ARE YOU ANYWAY?


I WAS PLACED IN YOUR PATH, EARTHMAN — FOR A REASON THAT WILL NOT CONCERN YOU.
BUT IT DOES CONCERN ME.

WE HAVE LITTLE METAL ON OUR PLANET, STANAZ . . . THEREFORE THE ABILITY TO MANUFACTURE FASTER THAN LIGHT MOTORS DOES NOT EXIST. WE MUST LIE IN SPACE UNTIL SOME UNSUSPECTING FTL CRAFT PICKS US UP . . . THE REST YOU KNOW. IN A SHORT TIME WE SHALL HAVE ENOUGH CRAFT TO EXPAND TO OUR FULL POTENTIAL.

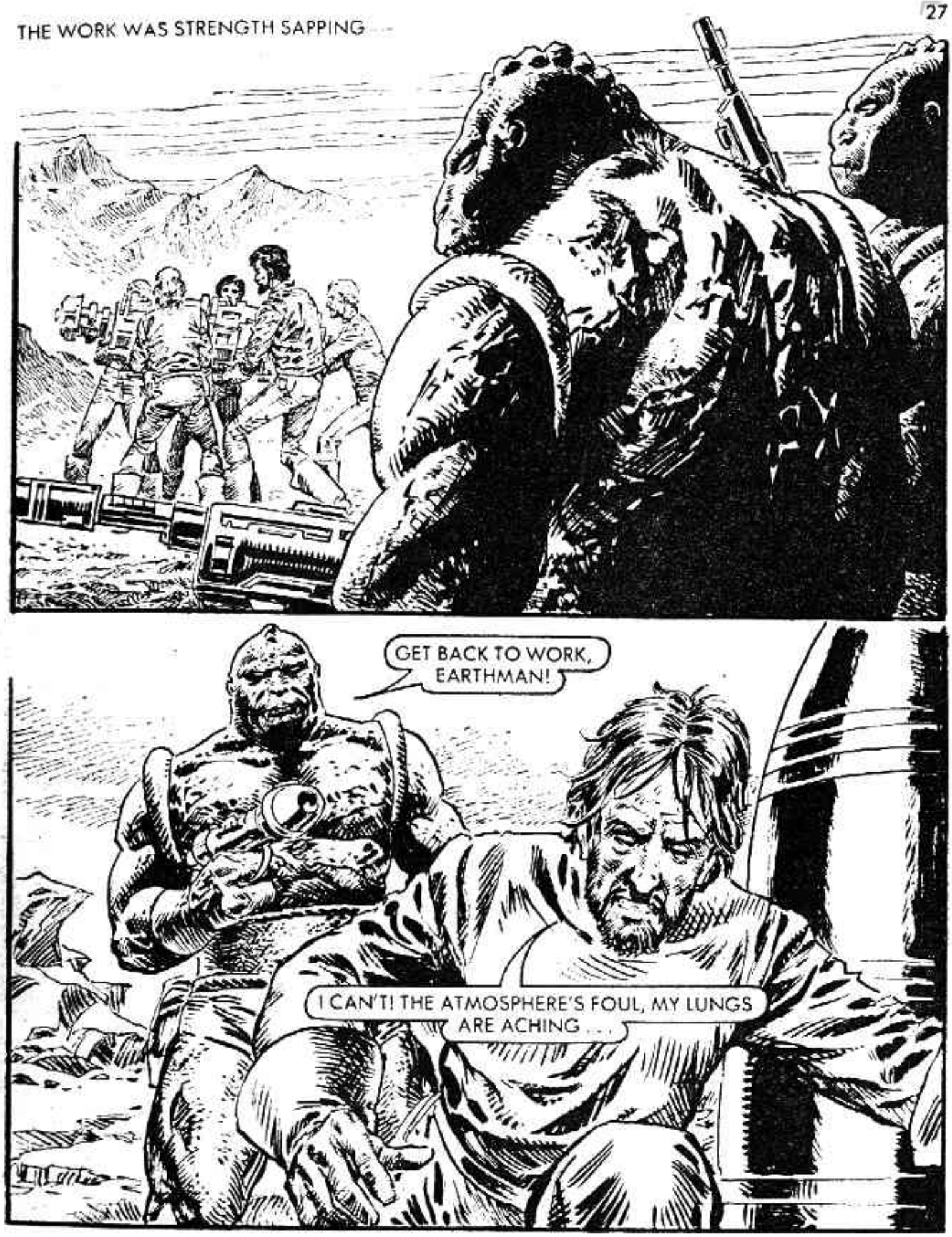

ULTRA SPED THROUGH SPACE TO THE SECTOR INDICATED —
THE CRAFT WAS ORDERED DOWN ON A DESOLATE PLANET —

WELCOME, CAPTAIN.
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US?

OUR SHIP WAS DAMAGED BY A HEAVY METEOR SHOWER. OUR FASTER THAN LIGHT DRIVE IS BEYOND REPAIR . . . HENCE, WE REQUIRE YOURS!

BEGIN THE REPAIRS. USE THE EARTHMAN.

THE WORK WAS STRENGTH SAPPING . . .



THEN DIE!
YOU MURDERING SCUM!
WORK, OR YOU JOIN HIM.

LATER, AS JERRY AND BEN USED A NUCLEAR WELDING TORCH —
PASS ME SOME SCRAP, BEN.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
WATCH—
CAREFULLY, HE CUT OUT THE ROUGH SHAPE OF A LASER BLASTER —

IT TOOK A LONG TIME, BUT JERRY MANAGED TO "CARVE" TWO BLASTERS.
KNOW WHAT TO DO, BEN?
CHECK!
JERRY AND BEN WAITED UNTIL TWO STONEMEN CAME CLOSE.
WORK FASTER, EARTHMEN!
NOW, BEN!
THEY HAVE LASERS! TRANSFORM!

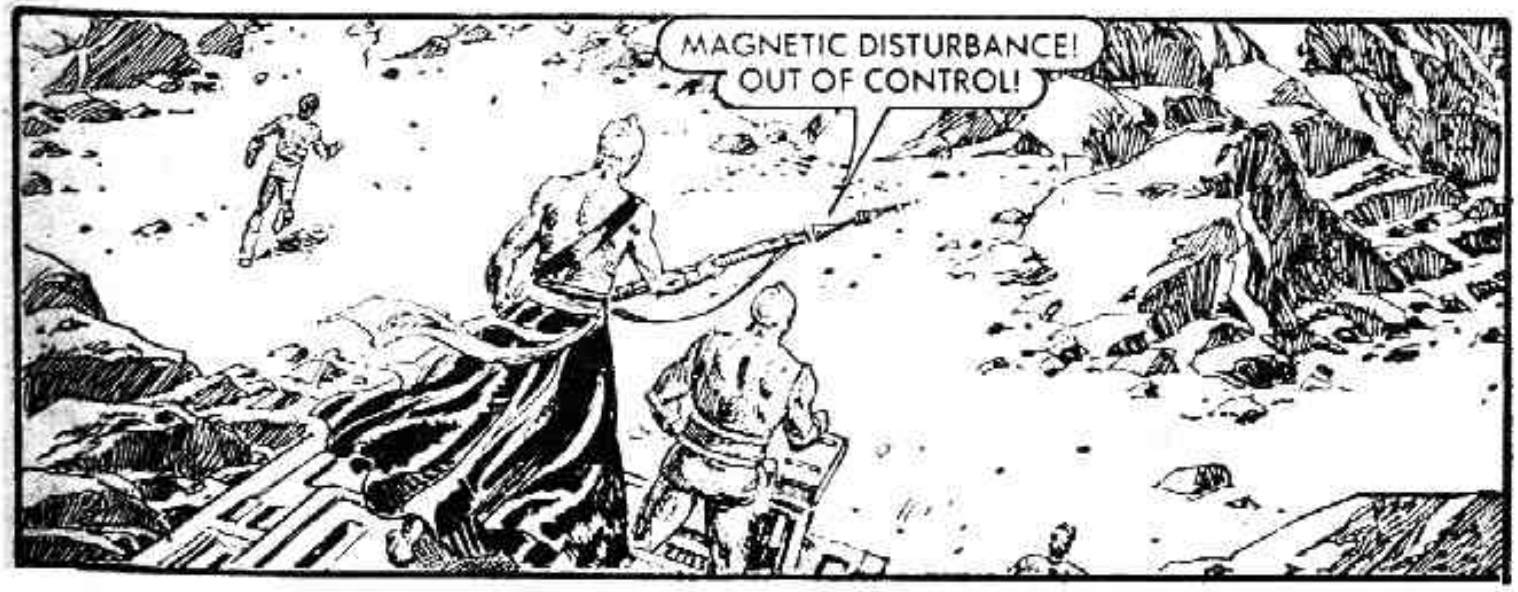
THE TWO STONEMEN TRANSFORMED TO THEIR STATUE APPEARANCE.
GRAB THEIR BLASTERS! THEY DON'T TURN TO STONE.
LET THEM HAVE IT, BEN!
THE STONEMEN COULD NOT DEFLECT THEIR OWN BLASTERS.

HELLER, NIXON, COME ON! WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!
THE EARTHMEN! STOP THEM! DESTROY THEM!
THEY'VE GOT NIXON!

NOW'S MY CHANCE!
HE FIRED AT A HUGE ROCK OVERHANG—
LOOK OUT! TRANSFORM!
THE ALIENS TURNED TO STONE, BUT THE JARRING AND SHEER WEIGHT OF ROCK CAUSED THEM TO SHATTER—

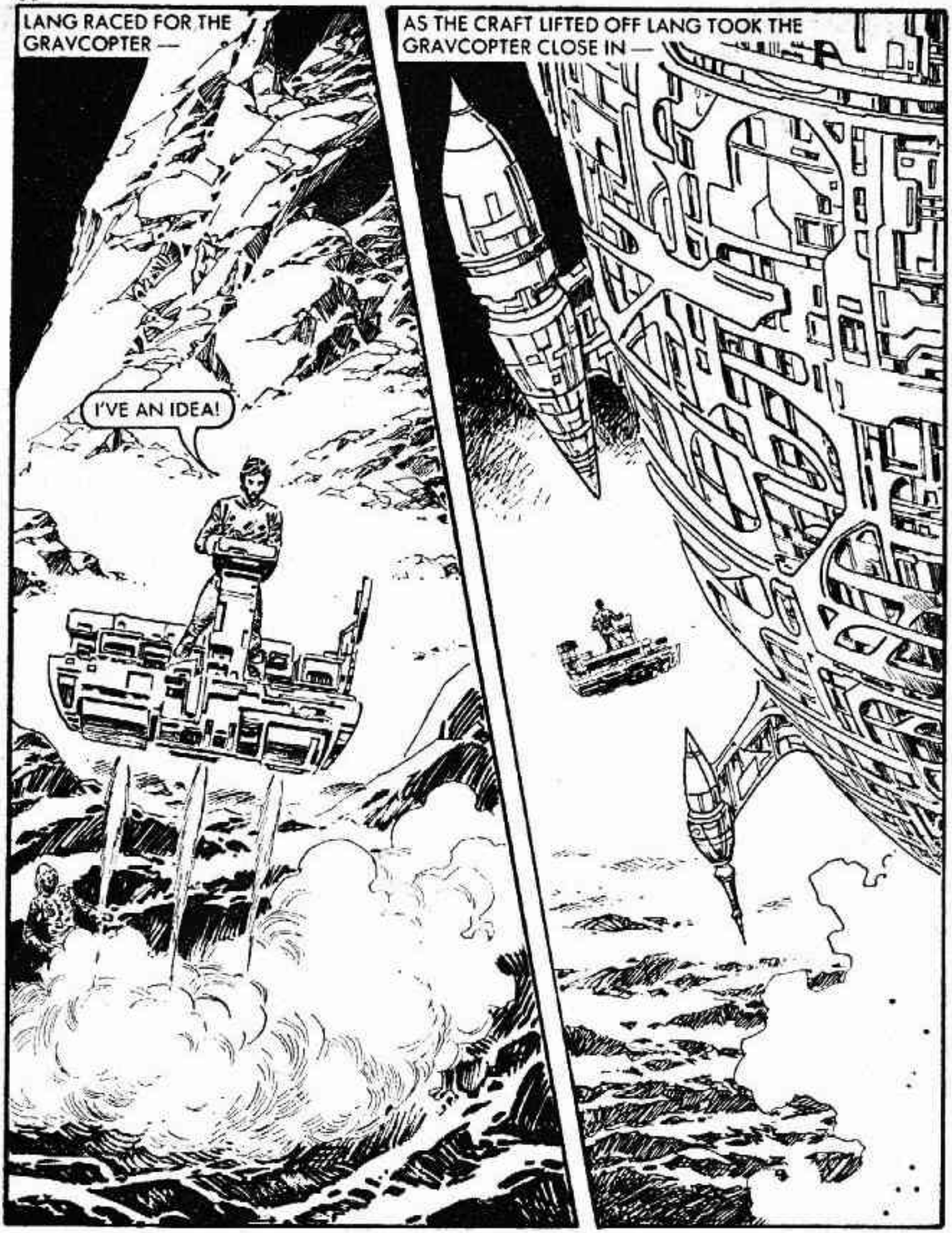
MORE STONEMEN APPEARED —
THAT'S GAINED A TEMPORARY RESPITE.
WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED!

JERRY! THAT ROCK IS PURE LODESTONE, A NATURAL MAGNET! HEAD FOR IT!


MAGNETIC DISTURBANCE! OUT OF CONTROL!

I HOPED THOSE THINGS HAD MAGNETIC GUIDANCE SYSTEMS . . . AND THE LODESTONE CONFUSED THEM.
THE STONEMEN WERE KILLED IN THE CRASH
IS THE GRAVCOPTER DAMAGED, BEN?
THE NULL-GRAV UNIT SEEMS ALL RIGHT. LET'S GET HER AWAY FROM THIS LODESTONE FIRST.

THE GRAVCOPTER WAS STILL AIRWORTHY —
NO STONEMEN ABOUT! THE SHIP MUST BE READY FOR TAKE-OFF!
THEY LANDED NOT FAR FROM THE SHIP —
THEY'RE LIFTING OFF!
WE'RE SUNK!


LANG RACED FOR THE GRAVCOPTER —
I'VE AN IDEA!
AS THE CRAFT LIFTED OFF LANG TOOK THE GRAVCOPTER CLOSE IN —

HERE GOES!
HE WRESTLED WITH THE EXTERNAL AIRLOCK RELEASE.
DONE IT!

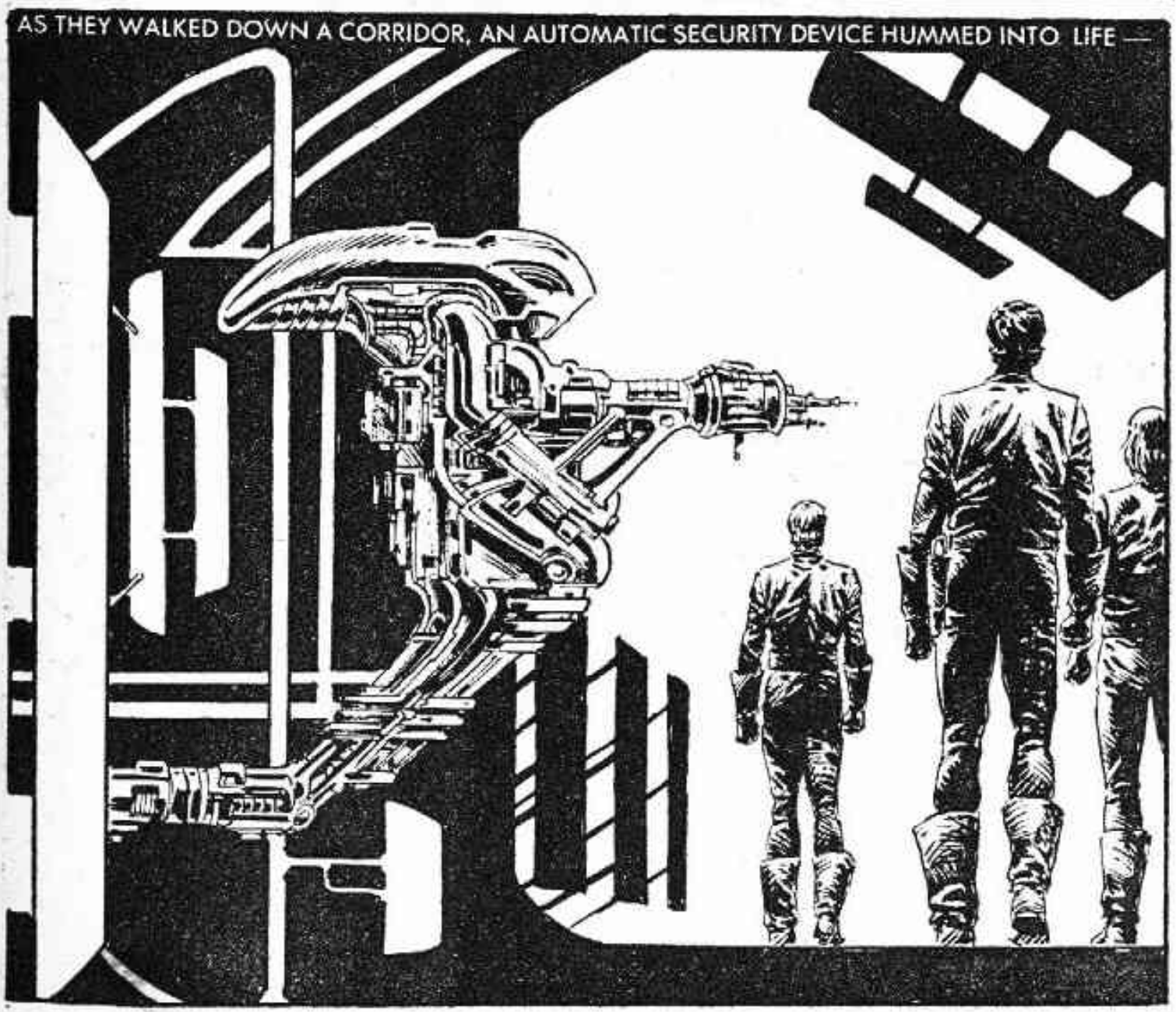
IN THE CONTROL SECTION —
LEADER, DECOMPRESSION IN SECTION DELTA!
ABORT LIFT-OFF AND INVESTIGATE!

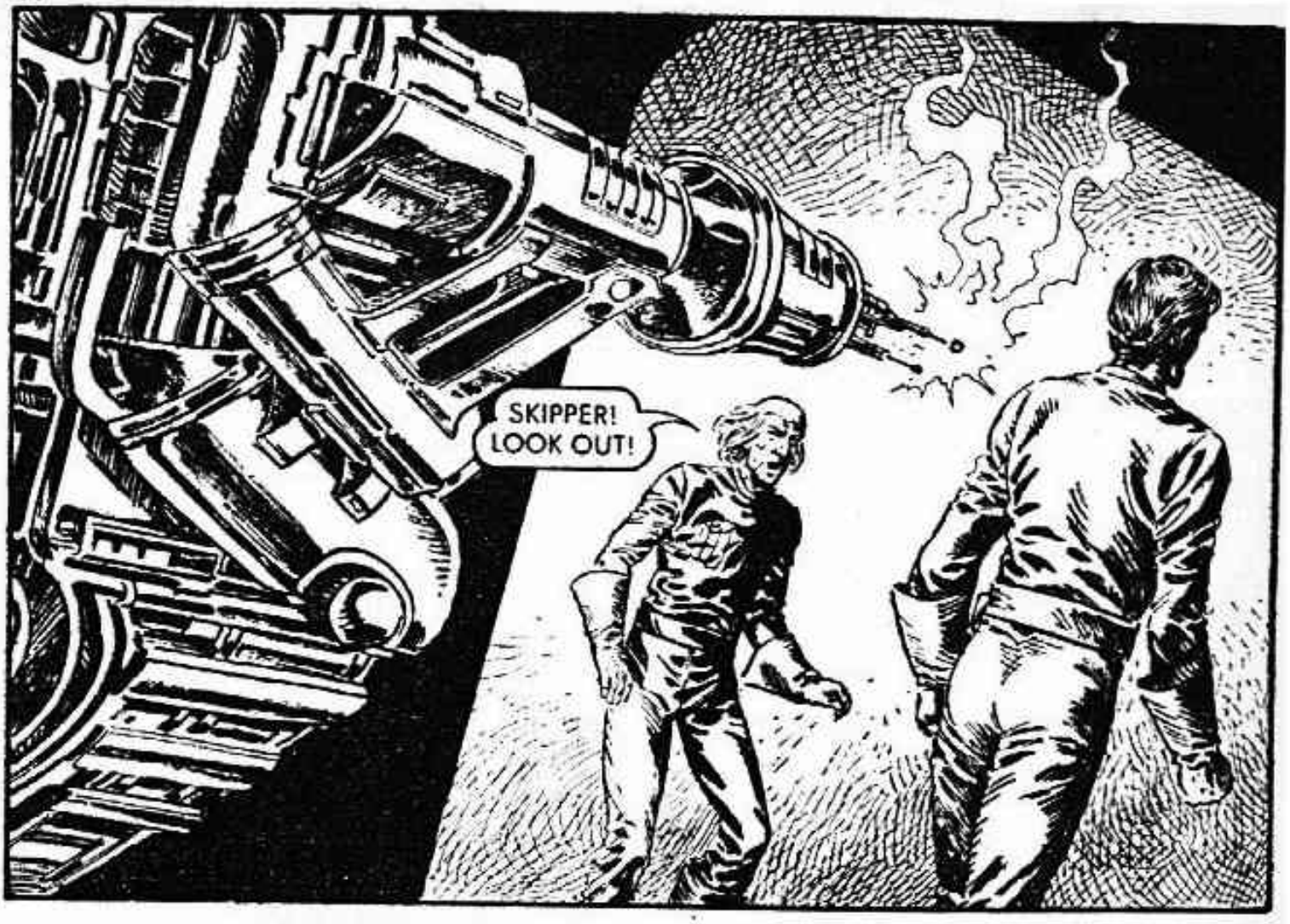
COME ON! WE'LL TAKE THIS SHIP!
ALL RIGHT, YOU WIN —
STONEMEN, COMING THIS WAY! I'LL BE A DECOY . . .

WHERE ARE THE OTHER EARTHMEN?

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, STONEHEAD!

THE EARTHMEN ARE ON BOARD! ACTIVATE ALL AUTO-SECURITY SYSTEMS!

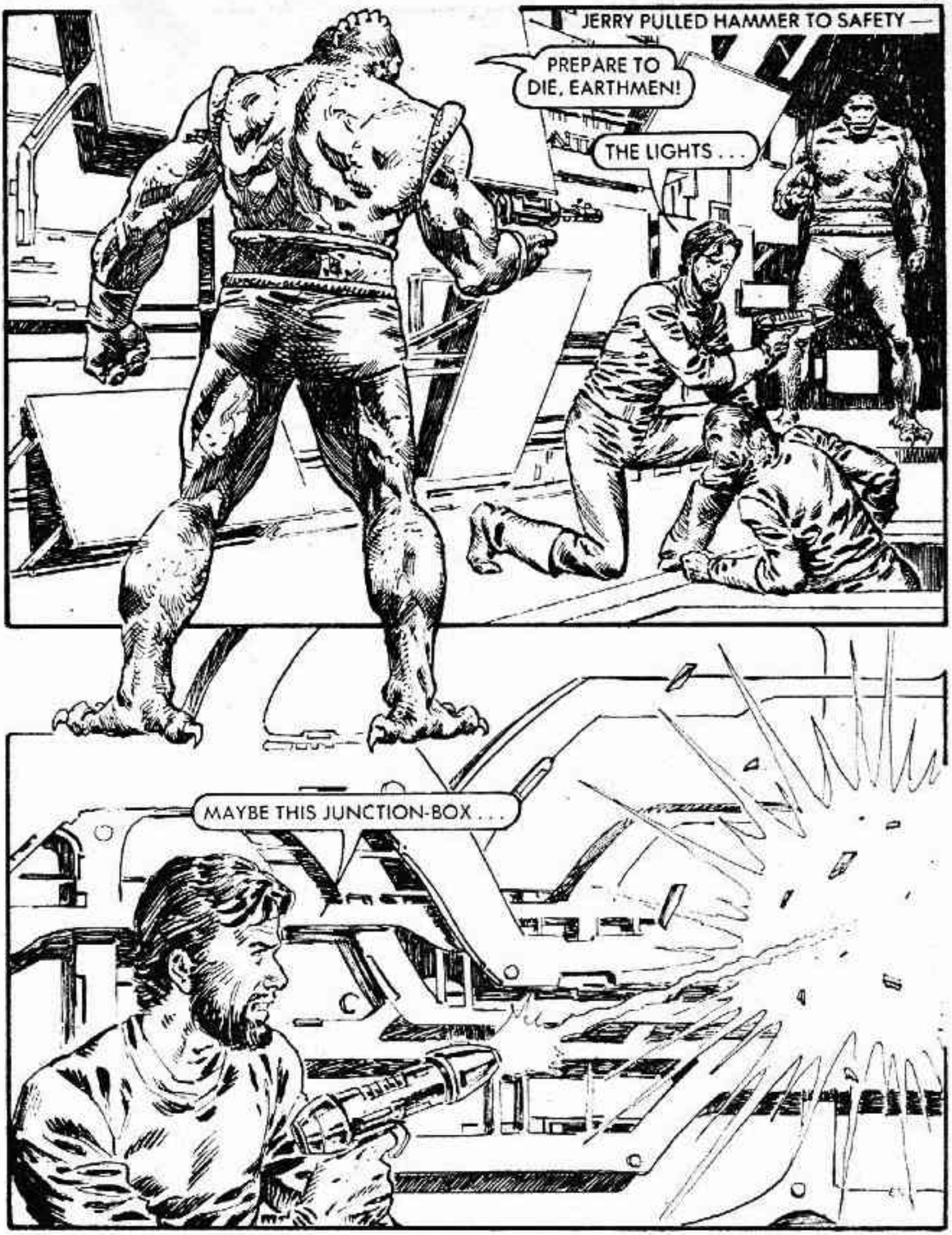

AS THEY WALKED DOWN A CORRIDOR, AN AUTOMATIC SECURITY DEVICE HUMMED INTO LIFE —




JERRY WAS THRUST ASIDE, AND HELLER TOOK THE FULL FORCE OF THE BLAST.

DESTROY!!
HELLER WAS BADLY WOUNDED —
I'VE GIVEN YOU A HUGE DOSE OF ANTIBIOT . . . STAY HERE AND REST, HELLER. WE'LL BE BACK.
JERRY AND BEN PRESSED ON —
BEN! WATCH OUT!

THE BLASTER DISAPPEARED INTO THE WELL, DISINTEGRATING AS IT WENT —
SKIPPER!
IT'S A HIGH-ENERGY VORTEX! MUST HOLD ON!


JERRY PULLED HAMMER TO SAFETY —
PREPARE TO DIE, EARTHMEN!
THE LIGHTS . . .
MAYBE THIS JUNCTION-BOX . . .

WITH THE SECTION PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS, THE STONEMEN FIRED BLINDLY —

YOU KILLED YOUR MATE, NOW I'LL GET YOU.

LET'S GET TO THE BRIDGE, BEN. BUT WATCH OUT FOR TRAPS!

CHECK, SKIPPER!

NO FALSE MOVES, STONEMAN —
YOU HAVE KILLED ALL BUT THREE OF US, CAPTAIN, AND AS YOU HAVE OUR BLASTERS WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES BY TRANSFORMING. I HAVE BEGUN THE SELF-DESTRUCT COUNTDOWN. LOOK . . .

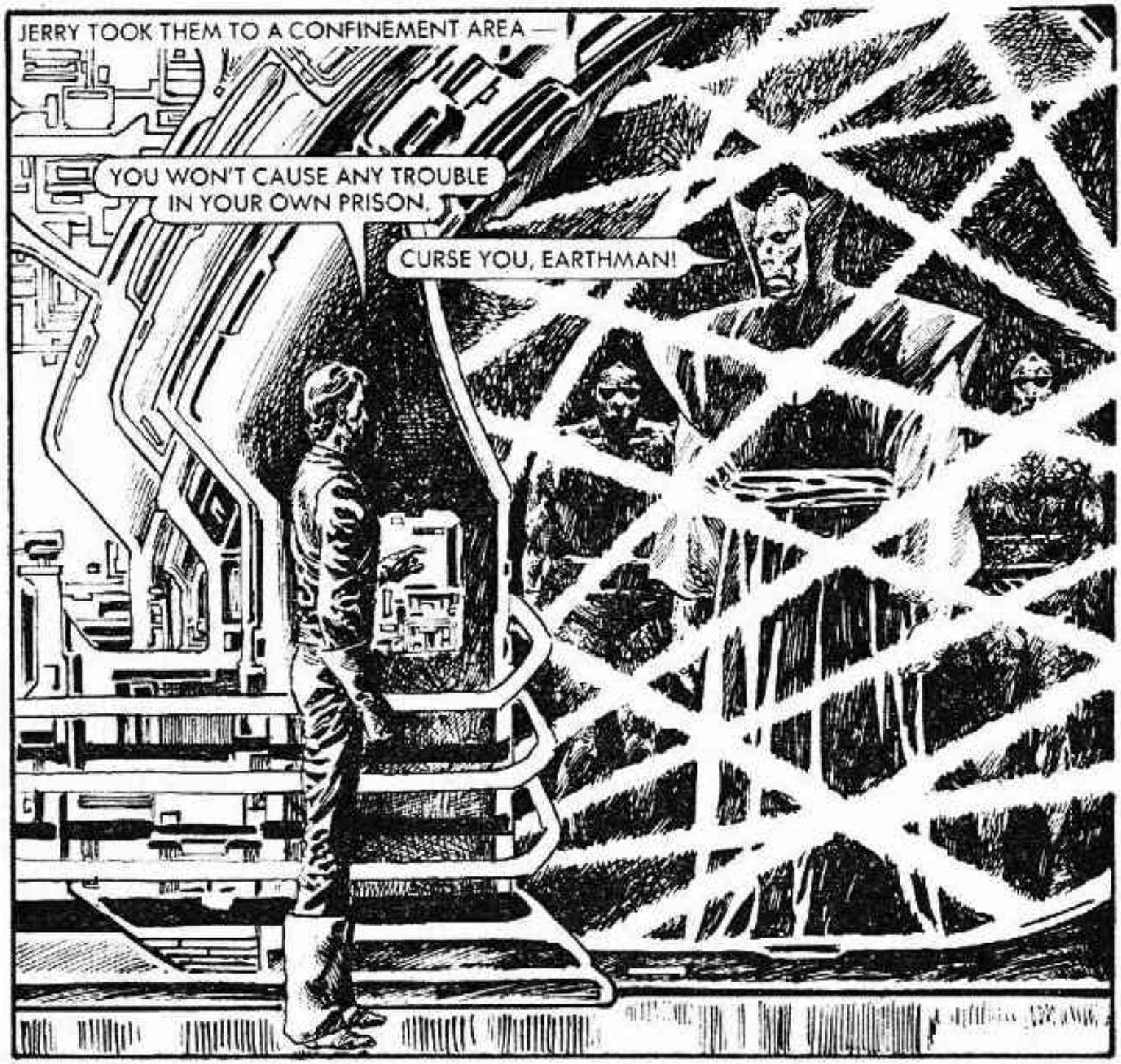
IN 30 CHRONONS THE SHIP WILL EXPLODE. HOWEVER, IF YOU GIVE UP YOUR WEAPON I WILL ENTER THE COUNTERMAND CODE. I PROMISE YOU WILL BE SPARED.
30
TRY IT! I'LL KEEP OUR FRIENDS COVERED!
BEN, CAN YOU DISCONNECT THE DESTRUCT CIRCUIT?
I DON'T KNOW, CAPTAIN. THIS ALIEN HARDWARE IS WEIRD!

THIS CIRCUITRY SEEMS TO WORK ON SOME KIND OF LASER-OPTICS PRINCIPLE . . .
ANY LUCK?
FOOLS! WE WILL ALL DIE!

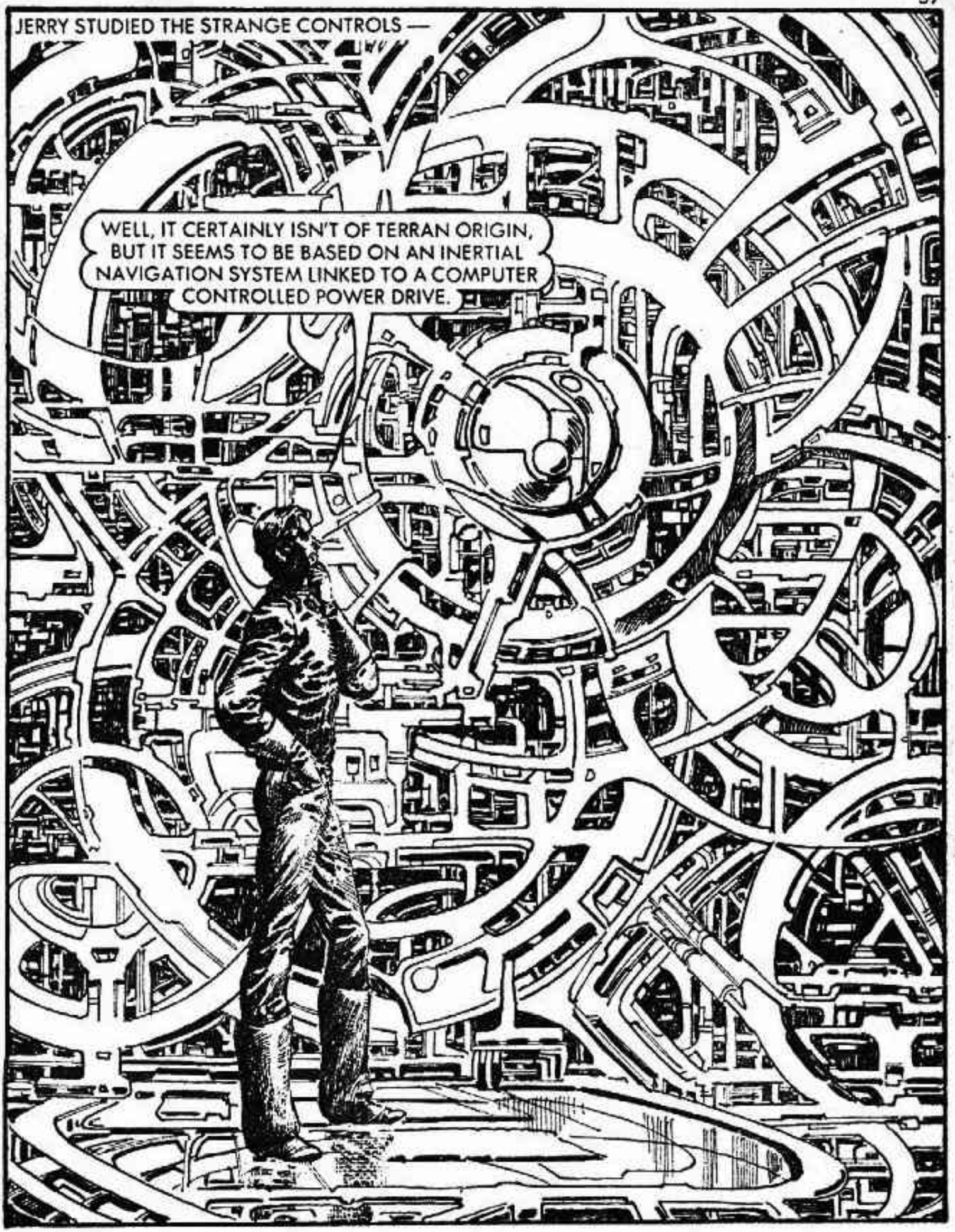
MAYBE THIS WILL DO IT . . .
BEN BROKE A CONNECTION —
— WHICH RESULTED IN A BLAST OF ENERGY.

BUT THE COUNTDOWN HAD STOPPED!
YOU DID IT!
NOW YOU CAN FLY US BACK TO SPACEBASE 5.
WE WILL NOT CO-OPERATE.

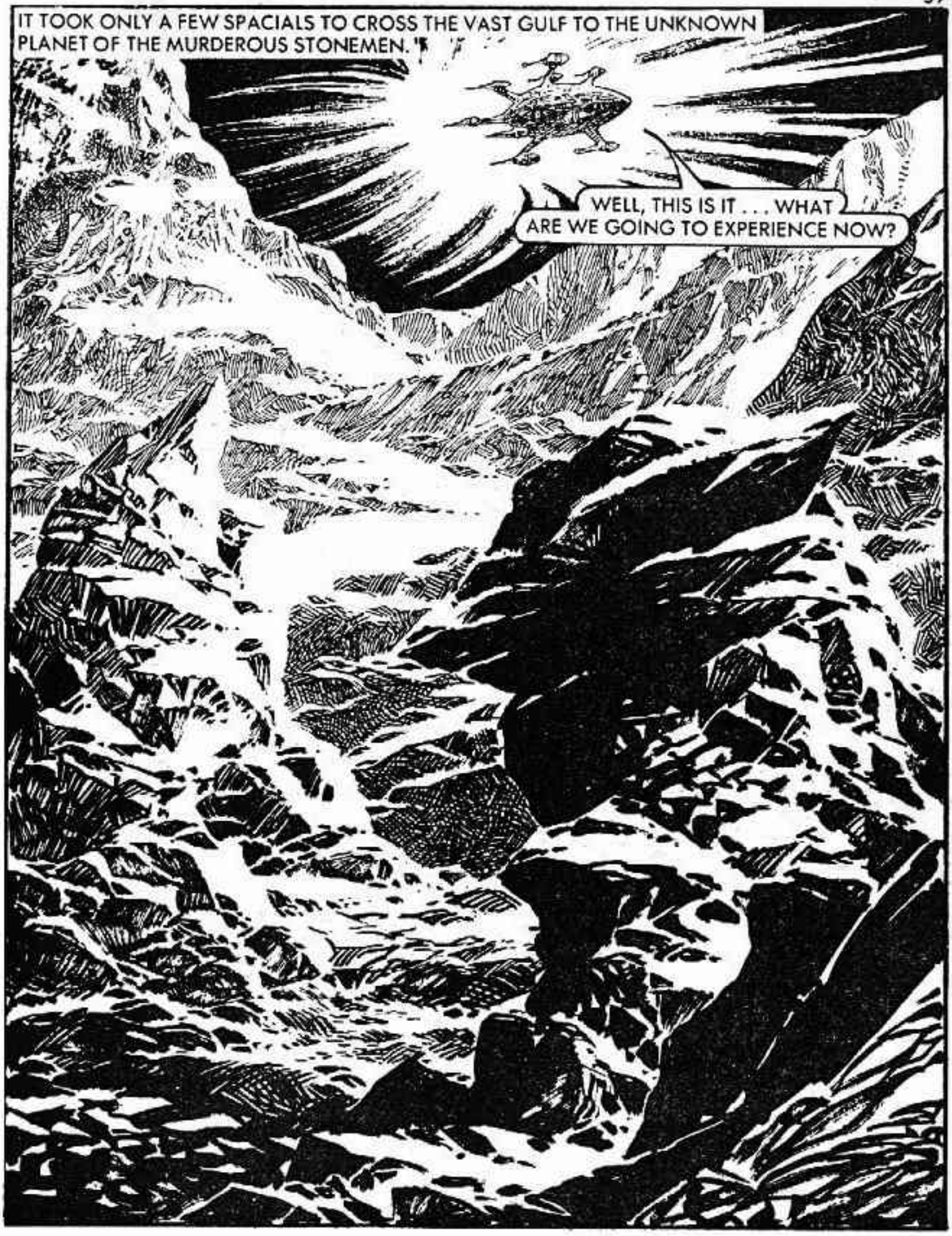
IN THAT CASE, COME WITH ME . . .


JERRY TOOK THEM TO A CONFINEMENT AREA —
YOU WON'T CAUSE ANY TROUBLE IN YOUR OWN PRISON.
CURSE YOU, EARTHMAN!

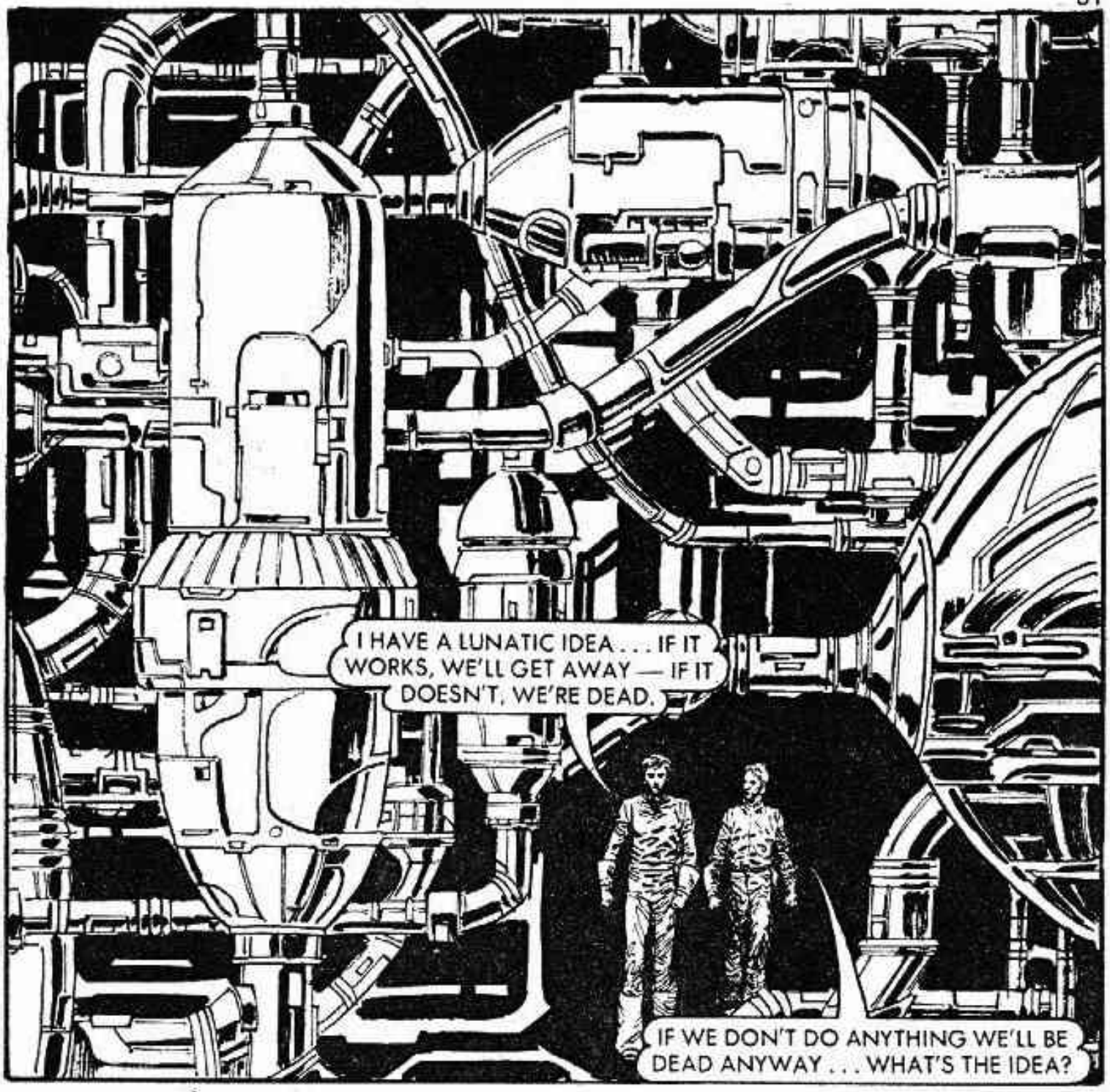
CREWMAN HELLER WAS BROUGHT TO THE MEDCENTRE —
YOU'LL BE FINE, HELLER. NOW LIE HERE AND REST. WE ARE GOING TO FIX THESE STONEMEN ONCE AND FOR ALL.
CAN YOU FLY THIS SHIP, SKIPPER?
LATER —
I'LL HAVE TO, BEN. THE TWO OF US CAN'T REPLACE THE ULTRA'S FTL DRIVE.


JERRY STUDIED THE STRANGE CONTROLS —
WELL, IT CERTAINLY ISN'T OF TERRAN ORIGIN, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE BASED ON AN INERTIAL NAVIGATION SYSTEM LINKED TO A COMPUTER CONTROLLED POWER DRIVE.

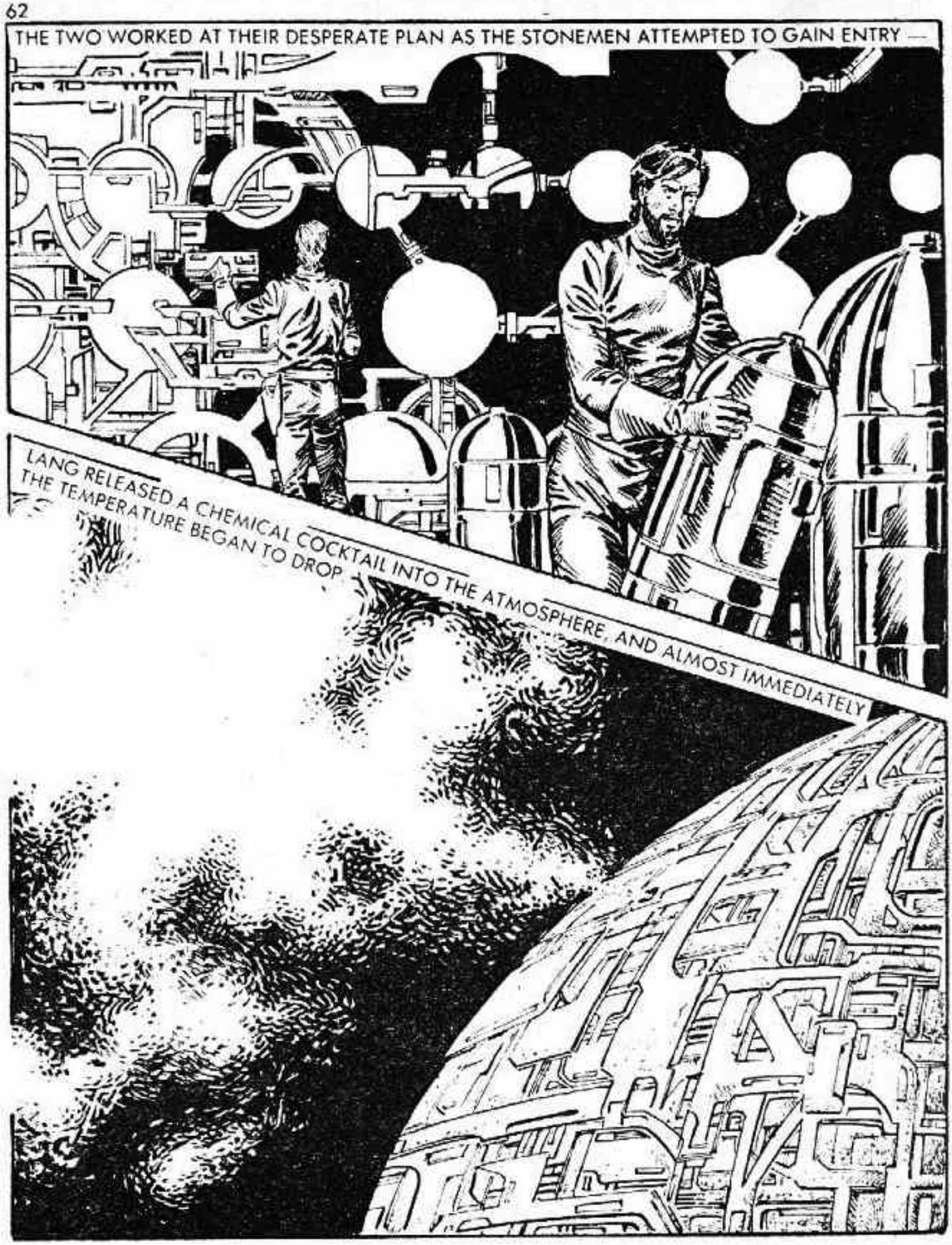
. . . BEING VAGUELY LIKE SOMETHING HE REMEMBERED FROM PILOT SCHOOL, JERRY SAT IN THE CONTROL SEAT AND HOPED . . .
HOLD ON, BEN! IT'S NOW OR NEVER! FIRING MAIN THRUSTERS . . .
THE CRAFT INSTANTANEOUSLY WARPED INTO SPACE —
JUPE! THIS CRAFT IS PREPROGRAMMED—WE CAN'T CHANGE COURSE, AND AS FAR AS I CAN MAKE OUT, WE'RE HEADING FOR THE STONEMEN'S WORLD.


IT TOOK ONLY A FEW SPACIALS TO CROSS THE VAST GULF TO THE UNKNOWN PLANET OF THE MURDEROUS STONEMEN.
WELL, THIS IS IT . . . WHAT ARE WE GOING TO EXPERIENCE NOW?

AS THE CRAFT LANDED —
THE VIDSCREEN SHOWED ALIENS AT THE CONTROLS — BE READY TO BLAST THEM.
HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE YOU TO DEPROGRAMME THE COMPUTER?
WIPING AND REPROGRAMMING . . . ABOUT AN HOUR! WHY?

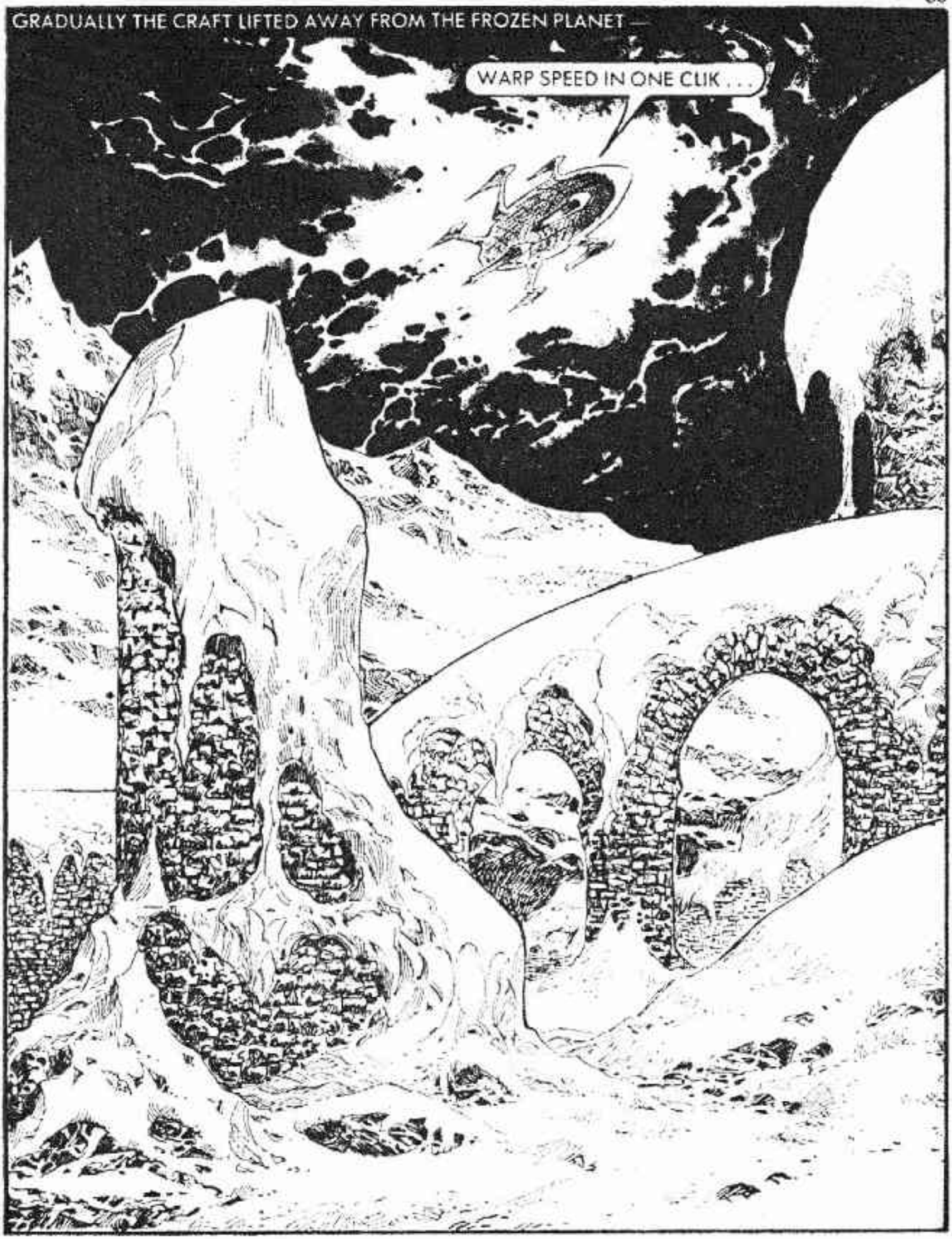

I HAVE A LUNATIC IDEA . . . IF IT WORKS, WE'LL GET AWAY — IF IT DOESN'T, WE'RE DEAD.
IF WE DON'T DO ANYTHING WE'LL BE DEAD ANYWAY . . . WHAT'S THE IDEA?

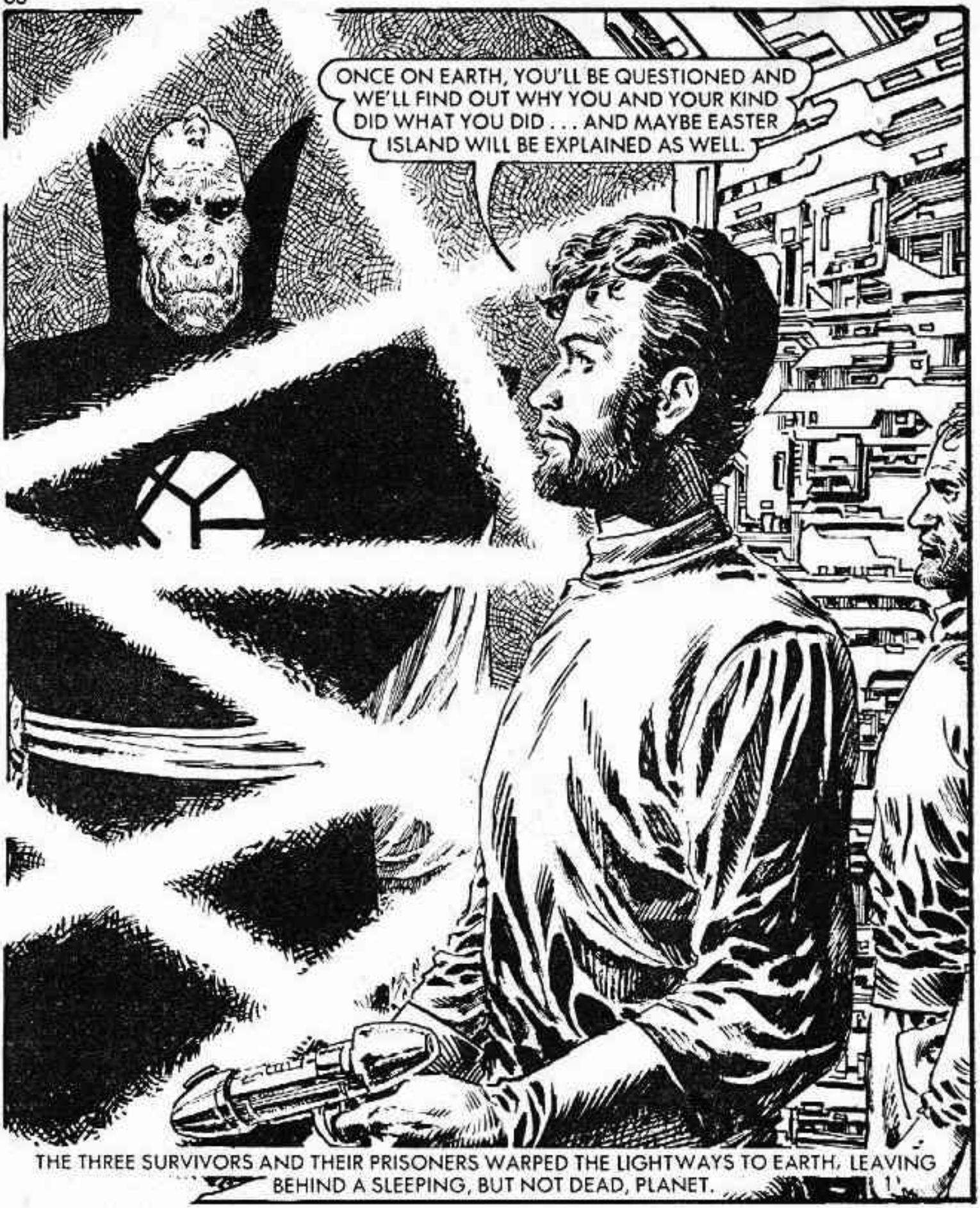
THESE STONEMEN MUST USE SOME FORM OF HEAT EXCHANGE TO TRANSFORM — THAT ONE WE FOUND IN FREEZING SPACE WAS DORMANT UNTIL WE TOOK IT ABOARD AND WARMED IT UP. THEY MUST AUTOMATICALLY HIBERNATE BELOW CERTAIN TEMPERATURES.
SO IF WE CAN REDUCE THE TEMPERATURE ENOUGH, THEY'LL TRANSFORM AND GO INTO CRYOGENIC SLEEP.


THE TWO WORKED AT THEIR DESPERATE PLAN AS THE STONEMEN ATTEMPTED TO GAIN ENTRY —
LANG RELEASED A CHEMICAL COCKTAIL INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THE TEMPERATURE BEGAN TO DROP

AS HAMMER REPROGRAMMED THE COMPUTER, JERRY FOUGHT OFF THE DETERMINED ATTACKS —
AT LEAST IT'S GETTING COLDER . . . BUT WILL IT GET COLD ENOUGH?

BUT THE LOWERING OF THE TEMPERATURE DID INDUCE SLUGGISHNESS —
IT WORKS! HAMMER . . . ARE YOU READY?
YES . . . I'VE JUST PROGRAMMED EARTH'S CO-ORDINATES . . .
FIRE 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .
ALL FIRED . . . LIFT OFF!


GRADUALLY THE CRAFT LIFTED AWAY FROM THE FROZEN PLANET —
WARP SPEED IN ONE CLIK . . .




Printed and Published in Great Britain by D.C. THOMSON & CO., LTD.,
185 Fleet Street, London, EC4A 2HS. © D.C. THOMSON & CO., LTD., 1984.

DON'T MISS

THIS MONTH'S OTHER ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURE

NOW ON SALE

# STARBLAZER'S

GUIDE TO THE SPACEMEN 19-20

Majors James Alton McDivitt, 35, right, and Edward Higgins White, 34, of the USAF were launched aboard Gemini 4 on June 3, 1965. A 4 day 1 hr. 56 min. 31 sec. mission ensued during which White became the first American to walk in space. He died in the Apollo 1 spacecraft fire on January 27, 1967. McDivitt commanded Apollo 9, launched on March 3, 1969 and lasting 10 days 1 hr. 0 min. 53 sec. He is now Senior Vice President in a large American firm.